



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

NAVAL MEDICAL COMMAND
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20372

IN REPLY REFER TO
NAVMEDCOMINST 5420.3
MEDCOM-03C
13 June 1984

NAVMEDCOM INSTRUCTION 5420.3

From: Commander, Naval Medical Command

Subj: ESTABLISHMENT OF BIOETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEES

Ref: (a) NAVMEDCOMINST 6320.2

1. Purpose. To establish bioethics review committees in naval hospitals.

2. Background. The advance of medical science creates the potential for raising ethical questions. Public awareness and command responsibility require a means of prompt resolution of the issues. Advice given the commanding officer will be more useful if the committee is comprised of those who represent a broad range of social values.

3. Policy. The policy of the Commander, Naval Medical Command (COMNAVMEDCOM) is to maintain life, health, and the autonomy of those whom he serves.

4. Composition. To better reflect broad social values, the Bioethics Review Committee shall be appointed by the commanding officer and shall be composed of seven permanent and four rotating members. Permanent members shall serve until replacements are appointed. Rotating members shall serve for 3 months. The chairman shall be appointed from among the Medical Department officers of the committee. The permanent members shall be:

Two Medical Corps officers (one of whom should be a psychiatrist)

One Chaplain Corps officer

One Judge Advocate General Corps officer

One Medical Service Corps officer

One Nurse Corps officer

One senior member of the Hospital Corps

The rotating members shall be:

One junior Medical Corps officer (LCDR or below)

One junior Chaplain Corps officer (LCDR or below)

One junior Medical Service Corps officer (LCDR or below)

One junior Nurse Corps officer (LCDR or below)

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5. Functions. The committee shall act as a decision making and review authority and shall perform the following functions:

a. Review all "do not resuscitate" (DNR) orders and notify the physician writing the order of the compliance or noncompliance of the order with the provisions of reference (a).

b. Serve as a forum for consultation by physicians, patients, or their families, and members of the hospital staff, regarding treatment decisions having ethical implications such as refusal of treatment, withholding of or withdrawal of life support systems, donations of organs, conflicts between therapeutic research and educational priorities, or other such matters as may properly come before it.

c. Counsel physicians, patients, members of a patient's family, or hospital staff members who request assistance regarding bioethical issues.

d. Recommend guidelines for routine application of bioethical procedures for decision making.

e. Sponsor and conduct inservice education programs designed to inform the hospital staff about ethical issues inherent in the practice of medicine.

f. Report monthly the committee's actions and recommendations to the commanding officer.

6. Procedures. The committee shall:

a. Convene within 24 hours of receipt of a request for review of a bioethical issue or decision.

b. Maintain committee meeting minutes which summarize deliberations and record the recommendations.

c. Meet weekly to review DNR orders, unless there are no DNR orders or other business to conduct.

d. Function with a quorum of six, at least four of whom must be permanent members. Decisions shall be by a majority vote of committee members present with a minority report to be included in the minutes by any members so desiring.

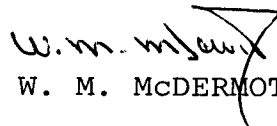
e. Receive daily from the director of nursing service, a report of the names, by ward, of all patients having DNR orders in their charts.

f. Assemble and file a "case record" when it reviews a decision made by or for a patient; to include a summary of the

patient's medical situation, a summary of the opinions of the physicians and others consulted, the minutes of the Bioethics Review Committee dealing with the case and the committee's written recommendations.

7. Support. The committee shall be provided adequate meeting room space and stenographic support for taking minutes, compiling case records, notifying members of meetings, filing data, and typing reports.

8. Action. Addressees shall ensure that the provisions of this instruction are understood and carried out.


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